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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/231, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. It provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and highlights future disaster risk drivers and their implications for humanitarian assistance. The report discusses a risk management approach for humanitarian assistance and updates information on progress in strengthening resilience and in other areas. It concludes with recommendations to improve response to natural disasters.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/231, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters. It covers the period from June 2012 to May 2013.

II. The year in review

A. Disaster data for the calendar year 2012

2. For 2012, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters registered some 310 natural disasters that killed over 9,300 people and affected 106 million people. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, approximately 32.4 million people were newly displaced by sudden-onset natural disasters in 2012, almost twice as many as in 2011 (16.4 million) and above the annual average for the period 2008-2012 (28.8 million).[1] Asia was the most disaster-prone region in terms of number of disasters (42 per cent of the global total) and also had the highest share of deaths (64 per cent) and affected and displaced people (68 per cent and 22.2 million, respectively). The comparatively limited number of fatalities, especially in relation to 2010 and 2011, which were among the most deadly and costly years on record, is largely attributable to the lack of mega-disasters in emerging or developing countries where vulnerability and human losses are usually higher.[2] At the same time, the high economic cost and level of displacement in the absence of mega-disasters appear to point towards increasing exposure of people, livelihoods and assets to natural hazards. Globally, disasters caused economic losses estimated at $138 billion, continuing the recent upward trend and marking the first time when annual economic losses exceeded $100 billion in three consecutive years. Those losses mainly affected industrialized countries, owing to the high concentration and exposure of economic assets, but they also affected countries with relatively small economies, such as Samoa, where economic damages from disasters were the equivalent of 19 per cent of annual gross domestic product.

B. Summary of major natural disasters during the reporting period

3. The most lethal natural disaster of the reporting period was Typhoon Bopha, which hit eastern Mindanao in the Philippines on 4 December 2012. Government sources report that at least 1,900 people were killed or missing and nearly 233,000 homes damaged. Over 6.2 million people were affected, including nearly 1 million displaced. It is widely believed that because of preparedness measures, including early warning, pre-emptive evacuations and pre-positioning of essential stocks and response personnel, more lives were saved than during Tropical Storm Washi in 2011, despite Bopha having three times the wind speed and twice the rainfall of Washi.

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[1] According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the global number of persons internally displaced by armed conflict and generalized violence at the end of 2012 was estimated at 28.8 million, an increase from 26.4 million reported in 2011 and the highest figure it has ever recorded.

[2] Decreasing disaster mortality rates may also be attributed to better disaster risk reduction, in particular enhanced early warning and preparedness.

4. Hurricane Sandy was the costliest disaster during the reporting period. After striking the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica in the Caribbean, the hurricane made landfall on the eastern seaboard of the United States of America, where it caused over $50 billion in damages in October 2012. The United States also suffered a severe drought, which affected large parts of the country and caused $20 billion in agricultural crop losses and increases in staple food prices, impacting people around the world.

5. Drought, its impact compounded by chronic poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, low agricultural production and high food prices, affected more than 18 million people across the Sahel in 2012, including an estimated 1.1 million children, who were at risk of severe acute malnutrition as a result. Early warning and rapid mobilization of funds enabled early action in nine countries, preventing a worse humanitarian disaster. Between June and September 2012, for example, up to 5 million people received food assistance each month, while 915,000 children were admitted to therapeutic feeding centres across the Sahel during 2012.

6. Flooding caused loss of life and destruction in many countries. Nigeria suffered its worst flooding in more than 40 years, with the Government reporting 363 deaths, 2.1 million registered internally displaced persons and an estimated 7.7 million affected by the floods. Pakistan was hit again by large-scale seasonal flooding, which affected about 5 million people, caused 473 deaths, injured 2,900 people and damaged 466,000 houses. Flooding also struck India, killing over 100 people and displacing over 2 million in Assam in July 2012, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where at least 170 died and 200,000 were displaced in August 2012.

7. Earthquakes also devastated communities. The most lethal earthquake of the reporting period hit the Islamic Republic of Iran on 11 August 2012, killing more than 300 people. In Guatemala and Mexico, an earthquake on 7 November killed nearly 140 people. On 20 April 2013, an earthquake hit the city of Ya'an in Sichuan Province, China, killing 193, injuring over 12,000 and affecting almost two million people.

C. Funding trends related to natural disasters

8. The Financial Tracking Service identified only $385 million in humanitarian funding (both within and outside the consolidated appeals process) for natural disasters (out of the overall humanitarian funding of $12.7 billion) in 2012, a steep decline from the $6.4 billion in 2010 and $1.5 billion in 2011, but closely resembling the figure for 2009, a year that also did not see any mega-disasters and had a similar level of disaster mortality. There was only one Flash Appeal for natural disasters in 2012: the response to the drought in Lesotho totalled $23 million, or 59 per cent of the $38 million requested.

9. The Central Emergency Response Fund disbursed $485 million, the highest figure in its history, of which more than $154 million were for response to natural disasters. This included $90 million for response to drought, $53 million for floods/hurricanes, $9.5 million for earthquakes and $1.5 million for locust infestation. The recipients of the five largest grants from the Central Emergency Response Fund for response to natural disasters were the Niger ($18.6 million), Haiti ($11.9 million), the Philippines ($11.2 million), and Pakistan and Chad, which each received $9.9 million.

III. Reducing vulnerability and managing risk

A. Drivers of future disaster risk and their implications for humanitarian assistance[3]

10. While progress has been made in reducing disaster risks and mortality, further investments in building resilience are required in the coming years. Three main drivers of future disaster risk,[4] leading to increased vulnerability and exposure of people, livelihoods and assets to hazards, can be identified, based on their potentially large adverse impacts. These drivers are global environmental change (climate change and environmental degradation), demographic trends (e.g., population growth) and rapid unplanned urbanization.

11. Combined, these risk drivers will affect the operating environment for humanitarian assistance, in other words, where and how it is provided. Moreover, these risk drivers and other challenges such as extreme poverty, socioeconomic disparity, gender inequality, water scarcity and food and fuel price spikes are interconnected. When several occur simultaneously, new vulnerabilities and needs are created and existing vulnerabilities further exacerbated. They can also cause considerable insecurity and instability. It is essential to take fully into account the interdependence of these drivers, trends and challenges, and their effect on disaster and crisis risk at the local level.

12. If investments in disaster risk reduction, building resilience and climate change adaptation cannot keep pace with increased disaster risk, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of disasters will increase. As humanitarian caseloads increase, the humanitarian system must help more people in new places, but with fewer resources in the face of greater demand and expectations for effective response. Caseloads may become harder to define as protracted and recurring disasters may create groups of vulnerable people to whom crises become "the new normal". Humanitarian actors will also need to adapt and develop tools, practices and approaches to address the needs of new demographic groups, such as growing urban and older populations. New types of vulnerable groups, such as people displaced by or migrating because of climate change, may not necessarily have legal or policy frameworks that support them.

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[3] In view of the focus of this report, this section discusses the risk of natural hazards, thus excluding risks related to complex emergencies and conflicts (discussed in the annual report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations), which often compound the impact of disasters and hinder longer-term disaster risk management and resilience-building and should therefore be considered as part of a comprehensive risk management approach.

[4] Disaster risk can be defined as the product of hazard (threats to human life and livelihoods, which may be natural or man-made), vulnerability and exposure, coupled with capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences. Vulnerability refers to the likelihood that an individual or community will suffer adverse effects as a result of being exposed to a hazard; it is a result of many, often pre-existing physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental factors.

B. Disaster risk management and humanitarian assistance

13. Today's international humanitarian system is primarily organized to respond to distinct, local events such as sudden-onset disasters, as well as violent conflict and other shocks that can result in humanitarian crises. To be more effective in the light of the changing drivers of disaster risk and the protracted nature of many crises, humanitarian actors, as well as Governments and the development sector, need to work in ways that reduce and manage the risk of disasters and crises, rather than simply responding to the impacts once they emerge.

Understanding and managing risk

14. Disaster risk management involves addressing both hazards and vulnerability, and aims to anticipate, avoid, lessen or transfer the adverse effects of hazards through prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures, while also building necessary capacities. Risk management is a systematic approach to managing uncertainty and minimizing potential harm and loss. It involves the following elements: (a) risk identification, assessment and prioritization; (b) reducing and preparing for risks; and (c) coping with disasters when they occur.

15. The first element involves assessing and analysing the hazards, degree of hazard exposure and factors of vulnerability that could contribute to a humanitarian crisis. Once risks have been identified, they can be prioritized and strategies developed to manage them. The second element includes decisions and actions to anticipate, avoid, mitigate and transfer risk. These include development and disaster risk reduction activities such as early warning, preparedness, livelihood support and insurance mechanisms that reduce the vulnerability and exposure of people and assets and mitigate the impact of materialized risks. The third element includes traditional humanitarian response activities, early recovery as well as activities associated with longer-term recovery and development.

16. Risk management should be approached as a continuous cycle of activities that are carried out and prioritized according to the local situation and changing levels of risk and need. For instance, disaster risk reduction, in particular preparedness, should be seen as a continuous undertaking that is integrated into response, especially during protracted or recurrent crises, as complementary to response and essential to improving it.

Constraints on risk management

17. There are currently two primary constraints on the effective management of the risk of humanitarian crises. Firstly, current activities and resources are overwhelmingly focused on response. Disasters will not be prevented or mitigated until disaster risk reduction, and especially preparedness, activities receive higher priority (while acknowledging that acute need in disaster-prone countries will frequently require greater resources for response). Despite advocacy and evidence that clearly suggests that prevention and preparedness are more effective and cheaper than response, they remain chronically underfunded. For example, during the period 2006-2010, only 3 per cent of humanitarian aid was spent on disaster prevention and preparedness and only 1 per cent of development aid was spent on disaster risk reduction.

18. Secondly, risk management is generally not carried out systematically or comprehensively. Managing the risk of crises requires the involvement of all actors and sectors because they operate over different timescales and have different expertise. Humanitarian organizations, by definition, cannot be responsible for managing the risk of crises over the long term. This is the responsibility of Governments, supported by development actors. However, humanitarian actors can work in such a way that they make the maximum possible contribution to managing risk and help build the capacity of Governments to undertake risk management activities themselves.

Implementing a disaster risk management approach to humanitarian assistance

National leadership and capacity-building

19. National, subnational and local governments and communities form the first line of response to disasters and should lead disaster risk management processes. Many Governments, especially in middle-income countries, have increasing preparedness and response capacities that help them cope with disasters, or seek advice and support from the international humanitarian system and other actors to increase their capacities for preparedness and response. The international humanitarian system should continue to support Governments in capacity development, through the sharing of expertise and tools to ensure that effective disaster management plans and capacities are in place. Coordinated international support (between humanitarian and development actors, in close cooperation with international financial institutions and bilateral donors) should help ensure appropriate information-sharing, joined-up planning and prioritization, as well as the alignment of resources in accordance with national priorities for disaster risk management.

Partnerships

20. To ensure that relevant risks are anticipated, analysed and managed, humanitarian and development actors need to find ways to work more strategically with a wide array of partners, such as affected people, civil society, local government, the private sector, media, military actors, academia and the scientific community. Many of these actors possess the expertise and capacity to analyse longer-term trends (e.g., climate scientists and economic analysts), manage local disaster risks (e.g., community organizations) and operate in distinct humanitarian environments (e.g., informal urban settlements) and with new types of caseloads (e.g., the urban poor, older people, climate refugees and migrants). These actors tend to operate within their respective thematic silos or are sometimes excluded from key processes, so coherence and comprehensive involvement should be ensured in risk analysis and monitoring, planning and implementation.

Coordination and planning

21. Coordination between humanitarian and development actors should be improved, particularly with respect to roles and responsibilities related to disaster risk reduction, early action and promoting sustainable recovery. To improve coherence between national, development and humanitarian planning processes, the implementation of humanitarian and development assistance should be better aligned, reflecting the example set by Governments that have started to establish

robust resilience frameworks. Risk management approaches should be reflected in various country-level planning processes, such as consolidated appeals, common humanitarian action plans and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, which should, in turn and as appropriate, be aligned with and form coherent components of other key plans, such as national climate change adaptation plans and poverty reduction strategies.

Risk analysis

22. With the right data and analysis, many crises are predictable to some extent. While predictive models and tools can provide indications, what is most important is a shared understanding of the risk landscape, a method to track the evolution of risks and a means to ensure that elevated levels of risk lead to action, i.e., produce appropriate, timely warnings that trigger the mobilization of resources, both human and financial.

23. Risk analysis carried out by Governments and development and humanitarian actors needs to be more closely integrated. A shared and comprehensive risk analysis of hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities, including gender analysis and data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other relevant factors, will help guide programming that can manage the risk of crises in the short, medium and longer term. This will require sharing risk information and investing in capacity, especially at national and subnational levels, to analyse and communicate risks as well as improving mechanisms for joint risk analysis, the results of which should be used to develop appropriate policies, strategies and programmes to build resilience for all risks.

Preparedness

24. When disasters strike, the capacity to react and respond depends on the extent to which the affected country and the international humanitarian system have prepared themselves. Better preparedness enables effective early action which in turn means reduced disaster losses and mortality and swifter recovery. Preparedness is thus an integral part of ensuring effective response as well as a critical component of resilience.

25. Humanitarian and development actors should establish a better coordinated approach and collectively support Member States, especially disaster-prone countries, in developing national, subnational and local capacities for preparedness and self-reliance in disaster risk management and response. Governments should be supported in developing long-term strategies and multi-year operational plans for preparedness, which should be embedded within disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies.

Early warning and early action

26. Effective risk analysis and monitoring should include clear thresholds and trigger mechanisms for early preventative and mitigating action. It also requires an attitudinal shift within organizations to create incentives for timely decision-making and appropriate action amid uncertainty. Lessons from the recent drought crisis in the Horn of Africa show that, while early warning information was accurate and timely, appropriate and sufficient action was not taken until disaster had already struck, emergency thresholds were surpassed and the window for cost-effective

early preventive and mitigating action had closed. Encouraging improvements in addressing these shortcomings and taking early action were evident in the response to the Sahel food crisis, but further concerted efforts are still required to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of response to similar crises.

27. Early warning systems ensure that communities can take timely action to avoid the full impact of hazards and are helped before they exhaust their coping mechanisms. This requires strong Government leadership and community engagement. Investment in national early warning capacity, sharing information on regional hazards and the ability to mobilize appropriate responses in a timely manner are required to translate early warning into early action. An important prerequisite is the availability of flexible funding and financing mechanisms able to release funds on the basis of early warning indicators, rather than having to wait until a crisis begins. To address uncertainty when initial early warnings are triggered, plans should prioritize "no-regret" interventions that build resilience whether the crisis eventually materializes or not. Response decisions should be based on evidence, inclusive consultations with all segments of at-risk communities, and also on an in-depth understanding of local needs, priorities, vulnerabilities, capacities and coping mechanisms.

Early recovery

28. Early recovery, as an immediate step towards building resilience in post-disaster settings, is a vital element of effective disaster preparedness and response. Integrating an early recovery approach within humanitarian operations — orienting preparedness and response to take into account longer-term objectives, such as reducing risks of future disasters, as part of essential and immediate life-saving action — is crucial to the first efforts of a community to recover from a crisis and find longer-lasting solutions to its impact. It also prepares the ground for an effective and smooth transition from relief towards longer-term recovery and building resilience for future crises. Early recovery efforts should ensure that people are more resilient than they were before the disaster by addressing long-standing causes and vulnerabilities that contributed to the disaster in the first place. If humanitarian assistance is to contribute towards lasting benefits to affected people it must, from the beginning, be inclusive and locally owned by communities, including the most vulnerable, and national and local authorities.

Innovation and technology

29. Innovation and technology can enhance risk management, strengthen early warning and preparedness and change response interventions by providing new tools to mitigate and address humanitarian crises and expanding opportunities to provide more efficient and effective humanitarian assistance. The use of satellite imagery and geographic information systems has improved hazard and risk mapping, early warning and needs assessment, while the humanitarian system needs to enhance its ability to collect, analyse and disseminate such information and ensure that it is used effectively as evidence in decision-making. The rising use of mobile/smart phones can help alert people to hazards in real time, allow donations by short message service (SMS) and greater beneficiary participation through feedback, and facilitate relief distribution by enabling the use of electronic cash vouchers and more accurate targeting of aid recipients. The growing prevalence of social media in disaster-prone countries presents opportunities for affected communities to access, communicate

and disseminate information. Humanitarian actors need to understand, capitalize on and actively drive these developments.

Financing

30. Financing risk management and resilience-building activities requires a shift away from funding practices that are focused on short-term response to one-off disaster events. This is especially important in situations where disasters are protracted or recurrent. Investments for risk management need to be increased through national, development and humanitarian channels and aligned appropriately, with funding decisions made at the country and/or regional levels. To enhance preparedness and help translate early warning into early action, funding should be predictable and readily available when there is sufficient evidence of increased risk and imminent hazards. Funding from different channels should be better coordinated to cover the needs of both short-term/acute preparedness activities, such as contingency planning, and longer-term development of national, subnational and international preparedness and response capacities as well as early recovery activities.

Post-2015 development agenda

31. A number of processes are under way to identify priorities for the global development agenda beyond 2015, when the target time frame of the Millennium Development Goals and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters will come to an end. The post-2015 development agenda offers a unique opportunity to ensure that sufficient priority is given to strategies and programming that can reduce and manage the risk of humanitarian crises, and that development assistance plays a greater role in disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery, including through adequate financing and flexibility to react to deteriorating situations. It is also an opportunity to better align risk management approaches that include disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and peacebuilding as key strategies to strengthen resilience to multiple shocks and stresses and establish essential multi-sector partnerships. The post-2015 development agenda also provides an opportunity to better address and integrate the rights and needs of marginalized and vulnerable people.

C. Progress in building resilience

32. Resilience is an example of a framework that integrates risk management and vulnerability reduction into a systematic approach.[5] Resilience refers to the ability of systems and people — communities, households and individuals — to endure, manage and bounce back from stresses and shocks. It implies that people have the capacity to maintain basic functions and structures during stresses and shocks;

[5] Building on the definition in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience defines resilience as "the ability of a system to reduce, prevent, anticipate, absorb and adapt, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions" (see CEB/2013/4, annex III).

access to a range of skills and resources that allow them to adapt to changing circumstances; and the ability to anticipate, prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from stresses and shocks without compromising their long-term prospects by emerging resilient to future shocks with reduced vulnerability and disaster risk.

33. Building resilience entails a comprehensive approach that builds capacity to better manage risks; addresses the physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental elements that contribute to vulnerability; and ensures that systems are in place to respond flexibly to shocks when they occur. It is a long-term, development-oriented process, which requires the sustained commitment of all relevant actors. It is a Government responsibility that is supported by both humanitarian and development programming, requiring closer integration of national, development and humanitarian planning processes, strategies and resource mobilization that link short-, medium- and long-term interventions, as well as the building of national, subnational and local capacities. Strategic and flexible, ideally multi-year, funding should support these efforts.

34. During the reporting period, a number of initiatives have focused on strengthening resilience. In December 2012, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals agreed to: (a) develop mechanisms for linking humanitarian and development planning mechanisms and improve system-wide coherent strategic planning capacity; (b) strengthen engagement with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to help build national preparedness and response capacity; (c) support the pilot initiatives (Chad, Haiti, Nepal and the Niger) to strengthen links between national and humanitarian programming; and (d) build the capacity of clusters and agencies to effectively integrate disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, and early recovery to strengthen resilience. In addition, the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in April 2013, will accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the integration of disaster risk reduction into all United Nations country-level operations with increased accountability.

35. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have launched the Political Champions Group for Disaster Resilience to encourage greater political focus on and investment in disaster resilience. The informal high-level group comprises ministerial-level representation from Governments, regional and international organizations and the private sector. The initiative seeks to build resilience in areas most affected by disasters, by supporting national resilience plans and providing the financial resources for disaster risk reduction strategies. It also seeks to improve coordination between humanitarian and development assistance and stimulate private sector engagement. The initiative is pursuing three broad work streams: building regional resilience, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel; promoting disaster resilience in specific countries (including Haiti and Nepal); and integrating disaster resilience in donors' humanitarian and development investments.

36. The European Commission launched the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR)-Sahel in 2012. The joint declaration, signed by representatives from over 30 countries, United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary

Union, sets out a road map for strengthening resilience in the Sahel. A potential minimum investment of €750 million over three years to build seasonal safety nets, invest in health care and other social sectors and in the functioning of food markets and to empower women, including those working in agriculture. Similarly, the Global Alliance for Action for Drought Resilience and Growth aims to bring an end to recurrent drought emergencies in the Horn of Africa. The Global Alliance, comprised of major international donors and other development partners, led by the United States Agency for International Development, brings together humanitarian and development actors and resources to take joint action in support of country-led plans, with an emphasis on building resilience and promoting economic growth.

37. The Resilience Dialogue series takes place at the margins of the annual and spring meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The latest Dialogue (April 2013) addressed the urgency of mainstreaming disaster and climate risk management in development planning and on the agenda of the joint World Bank-IMF Development Committee and discussed how resilience could feature in the post-2015 development framework.

38. To bridge essential emergency response to longer-term resilience-building, the World Food Programme (WFP) has developed new guidance on food assistance for assets. A number of activities contribute to improved access to food and to resilience-building through the restoration or rehabilitation of essential community and household assets. In 2012, over 15 million beneficiaries were reached through WFP food- and/or cash-for-assets activities, rehabilitating physical infrastructure (e.g., irrigation schemes, drainage lines) and contributing to natural resources management through water harvesting, tree planting, soil conservation and flood control measures. These activities have reduced risks of shocks and paved the way for partnerships of scale.

39. In the Niger, a community resilience strategy jointly developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WFP focuses on the development and diversification of agricultural production and community assets; a revised school feeding programme linking education, nutrition and local production; the prevention and treatment of malnutrition; and capacity-building for Government and partners on food security mapping, monitoring, preparedness and response. This and similar joint efforts in other countries underline that resilience can only be achieved through concerted action focusing on community participation, bringing together the assets and expertise of multiple actors and robust efforts to strengthen national and local capacity.

IV. Progress in strengthening humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters

A. Enhancing capacities for disaster preparedness and response

40. Member States have considerably strengthened their capacity to respond and prepare for emergencies and disasters with the support of the United Nations and its partners. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is developing the Common Framework for Capacity Development for Emergency Preparedness to support

national disaster risk management, through which humanitarian and development organizations combine their efforts at country level to develop, support and complement the capacity of national and local government and communities to anticipate, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

41. As part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda, the Sub-Working Group on Preparedness has developed the Inter-Agency Emergency Response Preparedness approach, an action-oriented approach to enhancing readiness for humanitarian response and improving response effectiveness. It also enhances predictability by establishing and reinforcing roles, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms within and between the humanitarian community and the Government. Its country-focused approach breaks down preparedness actions into four key components: risk profiling and early warning monitoring; minimum preparedness actions; contingency response planning; and standard operating procedures for the initial emergency response at both the inter- and intra-cluster/sector levels.

42. Regional trainings and simulations under the Emergency Preparedness Response bring together national, regional and international responders to strengthen collaboration between all levels and reach a common understanding on what is needed to ensure coherence and response readiness, using the newly developed emergency simulation guidelines for Government. At the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has developed the preparedness tracker, an online tool to manage and share information on inter-agency preparedness among the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, particularly for communicating forthcoming Emergency Preparedness Response training and simulation exercises.

43. Regional offices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have made progress in rolling out the minimum preparedness package in the past year. The package, an internal Office tool, is complementary to the Emergency Preparedness Response approach. A total of 29 focus countries across regions were selected for the Minimum Preparedness Package roll-out, based on priority assessment of risk, vulnerability and capacity using the global focus model, the Office's country prioritization tool. The roll-out has included a particular emphasis on clarifying roles, responsibilities and emergency capacities based on risk analysis, and in establishing inclusive humanitarian coordination structures. Additional support will focus on needs assessment and analysis; emergency communication strategy; and reinforced coordination between national and international humanitarian actors, the military and civil society.

44. To help identify at-risk countries and allow better prioritization of resources when investing in preparedness and capacity development, including the implementation of the Emergency Preparedness Response and emergency simulations, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is working with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and partners on developing a humanitarian risk index building on the global focus model, which will provide a common evidence base on humanitarian risk at the country level, analysing hazard exposure, vulnerability and capacity.

45. The United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continue to cooperate in promoting the implementation of the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief

and initial recovery assistance. This included the finalization of the Model act for the facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (a joint product of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and the beginning of a process to develop a model emergency decree as a tool for States that, when stricken by a disaster, have no comprehensive legislation in place. During the reporting period, Mexico and Namibia adopted new legal arrangements drawing on the Guidelines, while over a dozen States have relevant legislation pending. Most States still need to establish clear rules and procedures to prevent the most common regulatory problems in large international response operations, such as delays in visa processing and customs clearance for relief personnel, goods and equipment as well as taxes, duties and fees on relief activities. While awareness of legal preparedness gaps has greatly improved at the technical level, the political profile of this issue needs to be raised to achieve more rapid progress. The States members of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Association of Caribbean States show the way, having addressed the question at summit meetings during the past year.

46. The recently launched online Environmental Emergencies Centre[6] offers a programmatic approach to strengthening regional and national capacity to prepare for and respond to environmental emergencies, including industrial and technological accidents. The Centre offers training for emergency planners, disaster managers and national and local authorities in vulnerable countries, for instance on how to apply a multi-hazard approach in national preparedness and contingency planning for industrial accidents. Recognizing that community resilience is not achievable without sustainable natural resources management, the Centre also works to equip humanitarian actors with skills and knowledge to strengthen the accountability, efficiency and sustainability of humanitarian activities by addressing key environmental concerns.

B. Displacement and protection in situations of natural disasters

47. Natural disasters remain the most significant cause of displacement. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, approximately 32.4 million people were newly displaced by sudden-onset natural disasters in 2012 — almost twice as many as in 2011 (16.4 million) and above the annual average in the period 2008-2012 (28.8 million). However, this number does not represent the full picture. It does not encompass displacement related to habitat loss or food and livelihood insecurity caused by slow-onset disasters or gradual environmental degradation, including drought and desertification. It also only covers new displacement during 2012. Identifying protracted displacement situations, including data on people still displaced following disasters in previous years, is an important knowledge gap, particularly given the increasing risks people face and the opportunities lost during prolonged displacement. Another major knowledge gap is the limited collection of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and location, which hampers the effectiveness of responding to the specific needs of particular groups of internally

[6] The Environmental Emergencies Centre (www.eecentre.org) is an online tool designed to strengthen the capacity of national responders to environmental emergencies by building on their own mechanisms and drawing on the resources and services of the Centre's partners.

displaced persons (IDPs). To build capacity to address these gaps, the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS)[7] can provide technical assistance to Member States, humanitarian and development actors in obtaining, maintaining and updating reliable disaggregated data.

48. Disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, is critical for averting and minimizing the scale, duration and impact of displacement. After the emergency stage is over, efforts must be devoted to finding durable solutions that facilitate return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner. Return home within a short time frame is not always possible, depending on the situation and impact of the disaster. Where preparedness is weak, the level of destruction large and national and local capacity overwhelmed, people may remain displaced for years. The "IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons" provides guidance to assist national authorities and humanitarian actors to help internally displaced persons rebuild their lives, including in the aftermath of disasters. A number of factors support attaining durable solutions, including re-establishing local economies and livelihoods, ensuring a transition early on from humanitarian assistance to early recovery and reconstruction, encouraging self-reliance in affected communities and promoting their participation in activities at all stages of displacement. In situations of resettlement and relocation, strategies related to land, housing and livelihoods are essential, as is a community-based approach that considers the needs of receiving communities.

49. In many disasters, protection risks may arise when pre-existing vulnerabilities are compounded. Such risks include access to assistance, in particular for women and girls, older people, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons and other persons with special needs, including separated children and households headed by single people. Ensuring security, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence, which often spikes during emergencies, are equally important. The replacement of personal documentation (which is often needed to access essential services) is also vital. Housing, land and property rights must be ensured after disasters, when resulting displacement creates risks of forced evictions as well as confiscation, land grabs, and fraudulent sale or occupation of these assets. All affected people should enjoy a minimum level of security of tenure even if they lack formal home and land ownership documentation, especially where such rights may be informal, such as in slums and other informal urban settlements. Efforts are needed to reunify separated families and prevent trafficking of women and children, early marriages and illegal adoptions. In addition, the psychosocial impact of natural disasters is substantial while mental health and psychosocial care in the wake of disasters remains especially scarce. The revised Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee provide important guidance to national authorities and humanitarian organizations in incorporating protection in disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities.

50. New types of vulnerable groups, such as people displaced by or migrating because of climate change, should have legal or policy frameworks that support

[7] JIPS (www.jips.org) offers field support on profiling internal displacement (including tools and training on disaggregated data collection) in partnership with humanitarian country teams, tailored to affected countries that request assistance.

them. Pursuant to pledges made at the ministerial meeting held in December 2011 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Norway and Switzerland launched the Nansen Initiative: Towards a Protection Agenda for Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement in October 2012. The overall goal of the Initiative is to build consensus on key principles and elements regarding the protection of persons displaced across borders as a result of natural disasters, including those linked to the effects of climate change. It aims to set an agenda for future action at national, regional and international levels. Starting in mid-2013, State-led, bottom-up multi-stakeholder consultations will take place in five regions where climate change is already prompting movements of people.

51. Access remains a crucial prerequisite for effective response to natural disasters, in particular if they occur in a conflict setting with existing displacement and heightened vulnerabilities. In natural disaster settings, constraints on access can include limited physical access to disaster areas due to destroyed infrastructure, security considerations and bureaucratic requirements for the entry of personnel, such as visas and no objection certificates, and import of equipment and relief supplies. The delay caused by these factors can often be mitigated by addressing them as part of preparedness efforts, in particular contingency planning.

C. Addressing humanitarian challenges in urban settings

52. The scale and density of urban populations, especially the urban poor in highly vulnerable locations such as slums and informal settlements, is an immense challenge for humanitarian organizations. The concentration of people, assets and industrial facilities can lead to greater disaster impacts and requires a deeper knowledge of the physical and social structure of cities and their culture.

53. The great majority of tools, policies and practices are designed for humanitarian action in rural settings, and need to be adapted or developed to enhance the impact and effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response in complex urban areas. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is deploying senior urban advisers to work with humanitarian country teams and national partners across sectors and clusters to strengthen strategic contingency planning and emergency response design in urban settings. In 2012, the World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery launched the publication *Cities and Flooding: A Guide to Integrated Urban Flood Risk Management for the 21st Century*, which provides operational guidance on managing flood risks and integrating humanitarian and development activities in urban flood management strategies that inform and involve all key stakeholders.

54. Assessing and addressing urban vulnerability through community consultation is key to improving preparedness, resilience and targeting of humanitarian assistance to those urban poor who need it most, including those who have ended up in urban areas following displacement by natural disasters. UN-Habitat launched the City Resilience Profiling Programme to develop an approach to measuring and increasing urban resilience for disasters, while Concern-Kenya is leading an inter-agency process in Nairobi and other urban centres to better identify and assess urban vulnerability.

55. The number of actors and established governance structures can also present an opportunity for partnerships with municipal and national Governments, civil society and communities for relief delivery, especially when established prior to

disasters in high-risk locations and fully involved in joint disaster risk reduction efforts, including preparedness planning. In the Arab States region, UNDP is working with municipal authorities to meet the challenges of rural-urban migration, population growth, natural disasters and climate change. Many cities in the region, at risk of natural hazards, have acknowledged the importance of better urban governance, planning and disaster preparedness and, with support from UNDP, have established systems and capacities to address disaster risks, improving the safety of citizens, investments and infrastructure.

D. Developing and strengthening operational partnerships

United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination and International Search and Rescue Advisory Group

56. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination network and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group are well-established components of the international preparedness and response architecture. During the initial stages of emergency response, United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams provide an effective coordination interface between the national and international response by establishing an on-site operations coordination centre. The network's methodology, used to train disaster managers from Government, regional and international organizations and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, promotes inclusiveness and interoperability. As more countries and regions develop their own response capacity, United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination can share experiences in coordinating incoming international assistance as well as in roster development, training and management.

57. The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group is revising its guidelines, ensuring that the global standards of urban search and rescue reflect today's technical capabilities and systemic needs. The Advisory Group sets global standards and promotes the use of common operational guidelines in urban search and rescue activities and, through the Group's external classification process, provides a peer review system to ensure that international urban search and rescue teams meet and maintain these minimum operating standards and adhere to operational guidelines, international procedures and interoperability. The INSARAG external classification is pursued by many national urban search and rescue teams and has also become a benchmark for other first responders such as medical response trauma teams who are contemplating a similar classification process.

The role of and partnerships with the private sector in disaster response

58. The private sector can be a vital part of the solution to the challenges faced by the humanitarian system and its role is particularly important in disaster-prone countries with weak infrastructure and governance. The private sector supports business continuity by reducing the risk and destructive effects of disasters in their areas of operation and also continuously innovates and finds new and efficient solutions to stay in business. Public-private partnerships can ensure that the international system and communities can benefit from the innovations that reinforce national resilience efforts. Nevertheless, the private sector is often poorly integrated within humanitarian action, despite the fact that even a minimum level of

public-private engagement can improve the use of existing resources and help alleviate systemic and operational challenges.

59. The private sector can also play a key role in increasing the effectiveness of risk management efforts for the most vulnerable people. Oxfam America, Swiss Re and WFP are expanding a resilience-building approach that brings together safety nets, disaster risk reduction and microinsurance. In 2012, this public-private partnership reached a major milestone when nearly 12,000 drought-affected Ethiopian households received an insurance payout that helped them absorb the shock, repay loans and invest in agricultural inputs for the next season.

Progress and key challenges in logistics

60. An independent evaluation of the global logistics cluster in 2012 demonstrated the increased effectiveness and efficiency of response during natural disasters. The cluster has since expanded its scope of work at the global and field levels through the formalization of surge capacity mechanisms, the development of operational tools such as the relief item tracking application and the rapid assessment toolkit as well as the drafting of guidance.

61. The Logistics Emergency Team, a partnership between the cluster and commercial logistics companies Agility, Maersk, TNT and UPS, includes logisticians from these companies who can be deployed rapidly during a disaster response. The Team matches the capacity and resources of the logistics industry with the expertise and experience of the humanitarian community to ensure more effective and efficient relief operations.

62. Logistical challenges continue to exist, however, partly due to the multiplicity of actors involved and the complexity of the humanitarian supply chain. The presence of unsolicited or inappropriate relief items continues to pose significant problems in terms of efficiency and accountability. In collaboration with the logistics cluster and more than 50 humanitarian stakeholders, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has developed a strategic plan on unsolicited in-kind donations and other inappropriate humanitarian goods to tackle this problem. In addition, to circumvent bottlenecks for relief goods, the Office and the World Customs Organization developed a customs model agreement for the importation of relief consignments that has been signed by nine countries so far.

63. The Office's continued cooperation with Deutsche Post DHL resulted in two deployments of the DHL disaster response teams to support the Governments of Guatemala and Panama in the wake of floods. Over 400 DHL volunteers are now trained and available for deployment to help with specialized, pro-bono logistics expertise. Deutsche Post DHL is also assisting the Office to enhance information management of relief consignments, while its partnership with UNDP has helped build capacities of national authorities and prepare airports to receive incoming relief cargos in five countries so far.

E. Civil-military relations in disaster preparedness and response

64. Effective and efficient coordination between humanitarian and military actors in natural disaster preparedness and response remains a priority for the United Nations and Member States. National, international and United Nations military

forces possess unique response capabilities and can play a significant role in supporting humanitarian disaster response operations. There is increasing emphasis on developing national, regional and subregional capacity to deploy, receive and integrate military assets to effectively support preparedness and response operations. This includes the establishment of regional centres for excellence to enhance training, the collection and sharing of lessons learned, the development of standard operating procedures and guidelines and the establishment of rosters of regional civil-military coordination experts.

65. The prevalence of natural disasters occurring in conflict-affected areas remains a challenge for Member States and humanitarian actors. Lessons learned from recent response operations demonstrate the importance of adapting internationally established humanitarian civil-military guidelines, such as the guidelines on the use of foreign military and civil defence assets in disaster relief ("Oslo Guidelines") and the guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies ("MCDA guidelines") to country-specific realities, while national policies and/or legislation should also be brought in line with the principles and concepts contained in the "Oslo guidelines". The development of country-specific guidelines addresses the need for a structured and sustained dialogue between humanitarian and military actors and increases the understanding of the appropriate interaction between these actors in disaster response operations. In addition, at the onset of disasters, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provides country-specific guidance to Member States and humanitarian actors, articulating the required support and coordination relationships between humanitarian and military actors.

V. Recommendations

66. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are urged to build their capacity and increase efforts to strengthen the resilience of people and systems to all shocks and stresses.

67. The United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are urged to explore ways of further aligning the planning and implementation of humanitarian and development assistance, including through approaches that help identify and implement multisectoral solutions to risks and vulnerabilities.

68. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are encouraged to establish partnerships in disaster risk management and work more strategically with a wide array of partners, such as affected people, civil society, local government, the private sector, military actors, academia and the scientific community.

69. The United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are encouraged to coordinate their joint country-level efforts to support national disaster risk management processes, including by developing, supporting and complementing the capacity of national, subnational and local government and communities to conduct risk-informed planning and anticipate, prepare for and respond to natural hazards.

70. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are called upon to strengthen efforts to collect, analyse and share data

on disaster impact and losses that are disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other indicators to increase understanding of disaster risk and capacity and vulnerability of communities, including different groups of internally displaced persons.

71. Member States, regional organizations, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are encouraged to continue to improve the identification, mapping and analysis of risks and vulnerabilities, including the local impact of future disaster risk drivers and the development and implementation of appropriate strategies and programmes to address them.

72. The United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are encouraged to support national, subnational and local governments and communities in developing long-term strategies and multi-year operational plans for preparedness that are embedded within disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies.

73. Member States, regional organizations, the United Nations and development and humanitarian organizations are urged to that ensure effective decision-making and coordination mechanisms are in place at all levels to improve their response to early warning information and to ensure that early warning leads to timely, effective and appropriate early action that is supported by timely, adequate and predictable funding, especially for "no-regrets" interventions that build resilience for future disasters and shocks.

74. Member States are encouraged to provide timely, flexible, predictable and multi-year funding for programming that supports community resilience, including preparedness, early action and early recovery, through existing development and humanitarian funding instruments.

75. Member States and other donors are encouraged to provide dedicated financial contributions to preparedness, response and recovery efforts in a harmonized and flexible approach that fully utilizes humanitarian and development funding options and potential. This includes Member States' examining their own humanitarian and development financing mechanisms, as appropriate, in order to improve fast and flexible financing that recognizes the need to integrate longer-term perspectives into humanitarian response, including attention to building resilience, reducing the threat of hazards and mitigating the impact of disasters in the future.

76. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are urged to integrate risk management and the building of resilience to disasters into the post-2015 development agenda and to promote a complementary and coherent approach between that agenda and the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

77. Member States are encouraged to evaluate and, where necessary, strengthen their legal preparedness for international disaster cooperation, making use of the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance and reference tools such as the Model act for the facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance.

78. Member States are encouraged to put in place appropriate customs measures to strengthen the effectiveness of preparedness for and response to natural disasters, including through the signature of the Model Agreement between the United Nations and a State/Government concerning measures to expedite the import, export

and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and emergencies.

79. Member States are encouraged to cooperate in reducing and better channelling unsolicited in-kind donations and other inappropriate relief goods, through the implementation of the strategic plan on unsolicited in-kind donations and other inappropriate humanitarian goods and associated tools and promotion of its principles and best practices.

80. Member States are encouraged to develop domestic frameworks on internal displacement in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, including to address slow- and sudden-onset disasters, in order to further clarify responsibilities at the national and local levels, and also to ensure a comprehensive approach from prevention to assistance and protection during the displacement phase, as well as in the search for durable solutions.

81. The United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations are encouraged to continue to adapt and design tools, approaches and policies for humanitarian action in urban settings and establish partnerships with municipal governments, civil society and communities to assess and develop their capacities, improve knowledge of urban risks and enhance the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response.

82. Member States are encouraged to continue supporting country-specific and, where applicable, regional humanitarian guidelines on civil-military coordination, to bring national policies and/or legislation in line with the principles and concepts contained in the "Oslo Guidelines" and to establish and link regional centres of excellence, including rosters of regional civil-military coordination experts.